



Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

# Temperament



**You can't change your child's temperament. Understanding why your child might be behaving in such a way is better than trying to change them.**



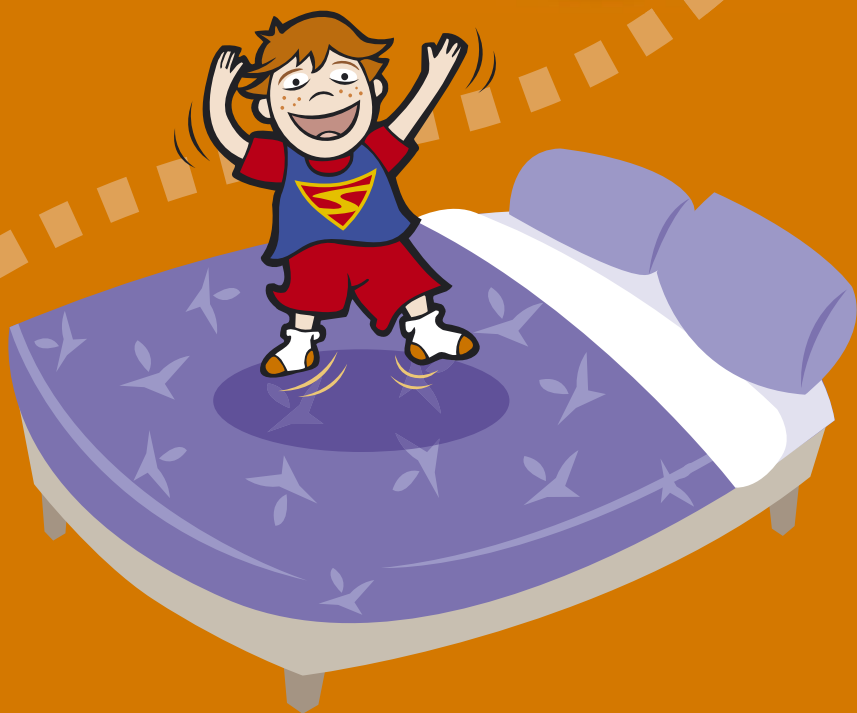
**“Different children's personalities need a different approach”**

# Like adults, all babies are different

Some are born easy to settle and placid, while others are wakeful and active. Some are regular in their habits from early on and others have irregular sleeping and toileting habits that make it harder to work out their needs. These traits start to show themselves in the first few weeks of life and are linked to particular temperament types.

Temperaments are inborn and are not the result of parents' or adults' care giving styles.

**“Different temperaments can be very clear if you have more than one child”**



# Types of temperament

There are three basic types of temperament – some children are a combination of more than one.

## 1. Easy or flexible

As babies, children with an easy temperament are easy to look after.

They are calm, happy, have regular sleeping and eating habits, and are not easily upset. As they get older these children need to talk things through as they may not demand or ask for things, or talk about their feelings. You may also need to keep an eye on things from a distance, checking that they know you are there if you need them.

## 2. Active

Active and feisty children are often fussy, with irregular sleeping and eating habits. They can be scared of new people and places, easily upset by noise and react really strongly to things. These children need lots of exercise and to be told about any change well in advance.

## 3. Cautious

These children tend to be shy in new situations, although they do get more positive as they get used to things. It's important to stick to routines and give them lots of time to get used to new situations and people.




# Your child's temperament

Understanding your child's temperament will help you:

- explain why your child might be behaving in a certain way
- anticipate how your child will react to a particular event or situation
- communicate with your child
- know which approach to discipline will be effective
- create a positive relationship with your child



**“I need to be ready to change how I react”**



**“You have to try different stuff with each child”**

**“My son has an extreme and quite volatile temperament. He can find taking direction difficult so I really think before I ask him to do something or stop doing something. I think ‘can I just let this one go?’”**

# Better understanding

**“If I look at how I react I can see how my own temperament affects the way things go”**

If you don't understand your child's temperament you might be criticising them for behaviour that is related to their temperament. This could lead to major clashes and to your child developing more extreme behaviour.

You could also start blaming yourself for your child's behaviour, rather than understanding it is simply how they are.

**“My first child's temperament winds me up; I get emotionally caught up in it and it's hard to be rational and objective. Whereas Jack is very gentle and sweet and easier to connect with.”**

**“I know that I can't change my child's temperament”**

**“Anticipate how your child will react”**

# Achieving your goals

Think about your child's temperament and how you are parenting them. The better the fit between your child's temperament and your parenting style, the better the results will be.

Your own temperament will also influence your parenting.

Different temperaments can be very clear if you have more than one child. Often the parenting style that works for one child will not work with another and you will have to use completely different techniques. One child may need more structure and boundaries than their brother or sister, while another may prefer making their own decisions.

Finding a way that suits your child's temperament will help you find a way to discipline your child that is effective. It will help you decide which issues you need to be clear and firm about and which ones you can ignore.

**“Find a  
way to suit  
your child’s  
temperament”**





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to raise their children in a positive way.

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Email: **[skipinfo@msd.govt.nz](mailto:skipinfo@msd.govt.nz)**

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For more information on support for parents go to

**[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)**

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